alliance québec

communiqué

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 11 A.M., TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1991

Alliance Quebec announces declaration of constitutional principles

Alliance Quebec, five English-speaking regional associations and a coalition of community leaders announced "A declaration of principles on constitutional change" at a news conference in Montreal this morning. The five principles (see attached) are the product of a broad consultation among English-speaking community leaders and reflect their growing concern that the national commitment to two official languages may be sacrificed as a bargaining chip in the current round of constitutional negotiations.

In outlining the principles, Alliance Quebec President Robert Keaton noted that they represent the key concerns of the English-speaking community in the quest for meaningful and workable renewal in Canada. It is important that political leaders across the country recognize their responsibility to uphold Canada's commitment to two official languages in the ongoing constitutional discussions.

The declaration will be sent to political leaders at the federal and provincial levels, and senior leaders from the English-speaking community will use every opportunity to deliver its message at meetings and conferences across the country.

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A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES ON CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Fellow Citizens:

Canada, our country, and Quebec, our home, have embarked upon a process of change. This process has the potential to lead us to a future of unprecedented opportunities, or to the dissolution of our nation.

The English-speaking community of Quebec supports constitutional changes that will respond to the needs of the entire country and recognize Quebec's place within the federation. We believe that any change must respect and incorporate certain basic principles, and provide for a strong and united Canada.

These basic principles include:

- That the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms be strengthened, and that no legislature have the power to suspend its guarantees;
- That the national commitment to the two official languages, as a cornerstone of Canadian identity, be reinforced;
- That existing rights to use English and French in the courts and legislatures be maintained;
- That constitutional guarantees of access to and control of educational institutions by both official language minority communities be applied fully across the country;
- That the right of official language minority communities to receive health and social services in their respective languages and the right of these communities to control their health and social service institutions, be included in the constitution.

Our community will not be bargained away. The English-speaking community of Quebec, those 800,000 of us from the Lower North Shore to Montreal, from the Outaouais to the Gaspé, of different origins, with roots extending back over two hundred years, insists that these principles be honored.

We are committed to building a renewed federation with the power and obligation to maintain basic rights of citizenship throughout Canada, a federation capable of meeting the challenges of the future.

Alliance Quebec/ Outaouais Alliance/ Committee for Anglophone Social Action/ Voice of English Quebec/ Coasters'Association/ Chateauguay Valley English-Speaking Peoples Association